



## osprey

*Pandion haliaetus*

Kingdom:	Animalia
Division/Phylum:	Chordata - vertebrates
Class:	Aves
Order:	Falconiformes
Family:	Accipitridae

## Features

An adult osprey is 21 to 24 inches long. The body is black or dark brown above and the belly is white. Its head is white with black patches on its face. There are black tips at the ends of the wing feathers. This bird has a wide, black band on the underside of its tail with a thin, white line at the tip of the tail.

## Natural History

The osprey winters in the southern United States near the Gulf of Mexico as far south as Argentina and Chile. It lives near rivers, ponds, or lakes. This bird is a carnivore, eating mainly fish. It also will eat amphibians, birds, and crayfish. The osprey plunges feet first into the water to grab a fish. There is a distinct bend in its wings when it flies. The call of the osprey sounds like "cheep, cheep." Spring migration through Iowa begins in late March. An osprey nest is built of dead limbs and placed high in a tree, live or dead, that is located near standing water. The nest may be used for more than one year. Ospreys mate

for life and may not breed every year. The female osprey is fed by the male from the time the pair bond is formed until the last of the two to four white eggs with brown markings is laid. Only one brood of young is raised per year. The male has been known to assist with incubation of the eggs. Fall migration starts as early as July. Birds can be seen in the eastern two-thirds of the state during the summer, but they are not known to nest in Iowa.

## Habitats

Mississippi River; interior rivers and streams; constructed lakes, ponds, and reservoirs

## Iowa Status

uncommon; native

## Iowa Range

summer: scattered throughout Iowa in suitable habitats; migration: statewide

## Bibliography

Iowa Department of Natural Resources. 2001.  
*Biodiversity of Iowa: Aquatic Habitats* CD-ROM.